

PhD project: Preference and Demand for Shellfish

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Introduction

Although seafood is just as important as other categories of food such as meat and vegetables, there is a paucity of marketing research studies of seafood both with respect to the price formation process and with respect to in depth consumer behavior studies until 1980s. In addition, the recent studies in seafood focused mainly on product category (e.g. fish or seafood). A product category includes a number of various sub-categories or particular items (e.g. marine fish, farmed fish, fresh or frozen fish, tuna, or catfish est.). These sub-categories are very different from each other in both aspects of attributes, price, and consumer preference.

The recent studies consistently show that seafood consumption behavior is significantly determined by attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control of individual toward the product. In a latent belief level, perceived quality, nutrition, and health are significant characteristics forming positive attitude toward eating fish (seafood); whereas some other attributes like smell and bones of fish have only negative affect on fish preference. The perceived price/cost, perceived time consuming to cook and prepare fish as meal, and availability of fish were found as main barriers or opportunities for food/seafood consumption. However, these results for fish category may not be useful for other categories such as shellfish and not be generalized for a more general category of seafood. This argument is supported by results of recent studies that consumers evaluate the shellfish products as not healthy, bad taste, and risky.

Farming shellfish species such as mussels and oysters has been increasing significantly in recent years. This development has positive effect to reduce high consuming demand on captured species that is alarmed as being overexploited. However, why consumers consume shellfish products at a low frequency is still question for researchers and marketers. In consumer behavior perspective, there is a lack of deep studies on what antecedents of the consumer preference on shellfish products are and what barriers are against consuming shellfish.

Objective

This PhD project will deal with demand and preference for shellfish with a focus on blue mussels in the EU markets. The project will firstly try to understand the demand structure by investigating how the price of blue mussel is formed and changed. Then, the project will pay more attention on the consumer buying behavior by investigating what are consumer attitude and attitude antecedents toward shellfish consumption, and how consumers in different cultures and markets among the EU perceive the product. The following questions are expected to be answered:

- (1) What are the supply channel and market demand in the EU for blue mussel?*
- (2) What are antecedents of consumer preference and consumption of blue mussel in the EU?*
- (3) How are differences of consumer's preference across different cultures (countries)?*
- (4) What are appropriate marketing strategies for different market segments in the EU?*

Theories and methods

To reach the first objective, an inverse demand model will be estimated by econometric analysis. The rest of objectives will deal with consumer behavior that uses the theory of behaviors like theory of planned behavior and classical attitude-behavior theory as research's conceptual framework. The methods using are multivariate analysis such as factor analysis, confirm analysis, conjoint analysis, cluster analysis, regression analysis, and structural equation modeling.

The secondary data will be collected from international statistical organization such as FAO, Eurostat, and other statistic agencies and companies. The primary data will be collected by questionnaire survey in several EU countries that consume much mussel (e.g. France, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Spain, or Netherland). It is possible that an experimental survey will be done to test the product attributes evaluation of consumer in the third year of the project.

The project has been started in February 2009 and lasted to January 2012.

About my self

I am a Vietnamese researcher. I got bachelor degree in Fisheries Economics from Nhatrang University, Vietnam. Then, I worked for several years as researcher and lecturer in Accounting, Finance in Nhatrang University before I got a diplomat in Applied Economics for Public Policy from Ho Chi Minh Economics University, Vietnam; and a diplomat of Fisheries Policy and Planning in Iceland. I finished my master program of International Fisheries Management from Tromso University, Norway in 2007. I have taught some courses in fisheries economics and management, marketing research, consumer behavior for undergraduate programs. I participated in some projects of fisheries development and consumer behavior research in Vietnam.